

Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose

The *Local Agency Guidelines* (LAG) manual is intended to help Montana's public agencies in Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula plan, design, construct, and maintain transportation facilities. To assist agencies in accomplishing these goals, the manual describes the processes, documents, and approvals necessary to obtain Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds to develop and construct local Urban Highway Program transportation projects and defray their costs.

The LAG manual is a compilation of information from many sources and is a reference source for administrative and field personnel in the local agency. To serve the needs of local agencies, the manual describes development requirements and outlines procedures for obtaining approval when local conditions warrant departures from adopted standards.

The Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) is the office within the Montana Department of Transportation's (MDT) Engineering Division that serves local agencies. MDT's CTEP Engineer, the local agency's contact person within MDT, is available to assist local officials with answers to their questions about the manual.

Constraints

This LAG Manual is based upon the following constraints agreed to by MDT and the local agency representatives on January 25, 2002:

- Limited to the Metropolitan Planning Areas (MPOs) – Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula
- Limited to Urban Highway Program Projects (STP-Urban funds)
- Projects implemented by qualified local agencies on a cost reimbursement basis

If the program works out to the advantage of MDT and local governments, in the future the program could be expanded to other project types.

Organization of the Manual

Using the glossary and the cross-references, readers should be able to find answers to most questions regarding procedural requirements for FHWA assisted transportation projects. The manual is organized to reflect the flow of a project through the major phases of development and to incorporate the differing developmental needs of different projects.

The manual is divided into four parts; each part contains one or more chapters which describe the requirements for completing specific project development activities:

Chapter 1-5, discuss Guidelines Overview and:

- Describe the purpose and objective of this manual.
- Provide a list of acronyms and descriptions.
- Explain the process for becoming certified to administer FHWA projects.
- Describe the procedure for coordinating local transportation programs with areawide planning agencies.
- Provide an overview of the project development process and program administration requirements.

Chapters 1-5 Appendices include:

- A flow chart summarizing major activities required to develop a transportation project.
- A checklist of required approvals.
- A checklist of tasks necessary to complete various project phases.

Chapters 6-12, General Project Development Processes, describe procedures which apply to all FHWA assisted transportation projects.

Chapter 13-17, Design, describes design standards for obtaining design phase approvals which must be incorporated into local projects, preparation of contract documents, and contracting for construction.

Chapters 18-20, Construction and Post-Construction, describe procedures for administering the project construction phase, describe procedures for closing out FHWA projects.

In each chapter, there is a general discussion section which gives background information, policy, and the rationale for the requirements. This is followed by a detailed description of requirements (procedures, documents, and approvals). In most cases, general discussion appears at the beginning of each chapter, while details of the process appear later in the chapters. Backup data, checklists, sample letters, and instructions for completing forms appear in appendixes to each chapter.

Updating Process

Since FHWA funding programs and eligibility requirements frequently change, the LAG manual is updated annually and more often, as necessary. When changes are necessary, MDT mails the revised pages to all manual holders. Local agencies are required to comply with all applicable rules, laws, and regulations that may not be up to date in this manual.

Comments and suggestions for improvement of the manual are most welcome. They should be directed to the MDT CTEP Engineer, who will forward them to the appropriate MDT staff where they will be considered in the next revision.